



# Parent Perspectives on Local School Wellness Policy Implementation

Summary of Findings Report

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## Executive Summary

### Background

Schools present a unique environment to improve the health and well-being of children, given the influence and contact they have with students.<sup>1</sup> Since the 2006-2007 school year, Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have required that all school districts participating in federal Child Nutrition Programs develop and implement a local school wellness policy (LWP) that sets forth nutrition and physical activity goals for students.<sup>2</sup> A LWP is defined as “a written document of official policies that guide a local educational agency (LEA) or school district’s efforts to establish a school environment that promotes students’ health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity.”<sup>3</sup>

Parents are a critical stakeholder group in the successful implementation and sustainability of LWPs in schools. Yet, while some studies have looked at parent nutrition education,<sup>4</sup> very few studies examine their perceptions or experiences with LWPs or school wellness. A limited number of studies have polled parents about the school lunch program<sup>5</sup> and more recently, the revised school meal standards.<sup>6</sup> No studies, to our knowledge, have documented parents’ perspectives and experiences with LWP implementation, particularly since the adoption of the LWP final rule (see Appendix A). Given that school districts are continuing to implement the most recent final rule and/or focusing on sustainability of LWP provisions, it is an important time to consider the perspectives of and engagement of parents. In response, this report examines parents’ perspectives and implementation experiences with the LWPs in their children’s schools and school districts.

### Methods

This report summarizes the findings of qualitative interviews with parents of middle school students conducted between October 2017- February 2018. Parents of middle school students were selected as the target group because, to date, few studies have specifically examined LWP implementation experiences in middle school. We recruited parents of middle school students through the Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK) internal parent database, *Parents for Healthy Kids* website database, as well as through AFHK state coordinator contacts. Parents were asked about their perspectives and experiences with LWP implementation. Thirty interviews were conducted with participants from 15 different states across the United States. Additional information on the sample, methods, and interview guides can be found in Appendices [B](#) and [C](#).

### Key Findings

Key findings and highlights from this report include:

- Parents varied widely in their involvement with LWP implementation; very engaged parents were outgoing and persistent in their efforts;
- Parents offered recommendations to fellow parents who are working toward wellness initiatives, such as finding “strength in numbers,” engaging Parent Teacher Associations

(PTAs)/Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) in wellness, researching best practices, and joining parent-run Facebook groups;

- Parents offered recommendations to schools and school districts to facilitate parent engagement, such as communicating about wellness, reducing transportation and childcare barriers, and assigning a wellness liaison;
- Parents described resources and technical assistance from groups such as state and national Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) as the most helpful;
- Parents noted that fundraisers were mostly occurring outside of school hours and focused on food fundraising; physical activity fundraisers were less prevalent;
- Challenges or barriers to involvement with wellness activities included: difficulty finding the LWP for their child's school district, communicating with the school and/or school district, and limited time due to economic constraints; and
- Middle school students were described as more independent than elementary school students; thus parent engagement was less encouraged from schools.

## Background

Schools present a unique environment to improve the health and well-being of children, given the influence and contact they have with students.<sup>1</sup> Since the 2006-2007 school year, Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have focused on wellness in schools by adopting a mandate that all school districts participating in federal Child Nutrition Programs develop and implement a local school wellness policy (LWP) that sets forth nutrition and physical activity goals for students.<sup>2</sup> A LWP is defined as “a written document of official policies that guide a local educational agency (LEA) or school district’s efforts to establish a school environment that promotes students’ health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity.”<sup>3</sup>

Parents are key figures in their children’s health and wellness, as well as critical stakeholders in the successful implementation and sustainability of LWPs in schools. In addition to the implementation of policies and standards, schools may offer a wide range of wellness programs or events that may be initiated by different departments across the school district, including parent groups, such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) or Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs).<sup>a</sup> While some studies have looked at parent nutrition education,<sup>4</sup> very few studies examine their perceptions or experiences with LWPs or school wellness more broadly. A limited number of studies have polled parents about the school lunch program<sup>5</sup> and more recently, the revised school meal standards.<sup>6</sup> No studies, to our knowledge, have documented parents’ perspective and experiences with LWP implementation, particularly since the adoption of the LWP final rule (summarized in Appendix A).

Given that school districts are continuing to implement the most recent final rule and/or focusing on sustainability of LWP provisions, it is an important time to consider the perspectives of and engagement of parents. In response, this report examines parents’ perspectives and implementation experiences with the LWPs in their children’s schools and school districts.

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<sup>a</sup>Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) includes formal membership with a national and state-based organizations and corresponding rules. In return for member fees, members can weigh in on state and national operations and priorities; for example, lobbying issues and efforts in Washington DC. Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) usually are parent groups that run independently and often are single school or district-level groups with no state or national-level connections.

## Parent engagement with wellness initiatives

We asked parents to describe their experiences with any LWP implementation activities, as well as wellness-related activities at the school district more broadly. This study included parents with a wide range of engagement with LWPs. Approximately half of the parents in this study had a high level of awareness about LWPs and were actively engaged with implementation activities at their middle schools. These engaged parents provided rich accounts of best practices, advice to fellow parents and to school districts, as well as other experiential knowledge gained through implementation activities. These parents had experiences with:

- advocating for or forming a wellness committee
- applying for and assisting with administration of school wellness grants
- serving on or leading a Parent Teacher Association (PTA)/Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or wellness committee
- advocating for wellness initiatives, including engaging other parents to become involved
- advocating for a district wellness coordinator and working closely with school district professionals to advance wellness initiatives
- raising funds for cafeteria/kitchen equipment and obtaining training opportunities for food and nutrition services professionals
- organizing individual wellness-related events, such as community fairs that include nutrition and physical activity components
- creating afterschool clubs at the school and school district

Interestingly, amongst the engaged parents, the range in which their PTA/PTO overlapped with the wellness committee also varied widely. Some parents were heavily involved with PTA/PTO and had participated with wellness initiatives but were not formally on a wellness committee; others were leads on implementing the LWP but had no involvement with PTA/PTO. A handful of parents were officially and unofficially the liaison between these two entities.

~~Another group of parents~~ About half of the parents in this study had interest in wellness or concerns about wellness-related aspects of their child's school but faced barriers to engagement or had not yet had an opportunity to be engaged. They may have volunteered on PTA/PTO or other school committees but were not leading initiatives or continuously engaged. It is notable that even parts in this "less engaged" group had some previous involvement with the school or AFHK (see Methods) and/or were interested in learning more about engagement; thus, the participants may not be representative of the 'average' middle school parent. As noted, these parents were curious about wellness in schools but mostly unaware of LWPs and were often unsure how to take the first steps in creating changes at their child's school. These parents provided insights into:

- perspectives about wellness in schools
- barriers to engagement

- recommendations for how schools and school districts can better support parents to be informed and engaged with wellness

The following discusses these two sets of perspectives and parents' insights.

### **Engaged parents were outgoing and persistent**

One group of parents was passionate about wellness and reported a high level of motivation and engagement to support LWP implementation in their schools and school districts. These parents were not timid when interacting with the school professionals and other parents.

- *This school is totally different and they needed a parent group really, really badly. I networked really fast and kind of just walked around the parking lot knocking on cars and made friends really fast. **I found my group of moms.***

Further, this group of parents was not deterred when their plans were not immediately supported by other parents, school professionals, or administration. These parents provided encouraging words for other parents who may be starting out:

- *I hear all the time, 'I don't want to be the one to draw attention, it's not my place to say it.' No, really it is, **it won't get better unless someone stands up to point it out** and maybe there are other people who would help you if you just say something in a nice way. Now if you come out with guns blazing, that won't get you very far either.*
- *Being a big mouth helps, it really does. You're not scared to just say, I know what I'm talking about. There's no reason that parents can't go out and do research and understand how important wellness is. The superintendents, that's not their job to be experts on wellness and **there's nothing wrong with you educating them on, 'this is what I know,'** these are what the recommendations are, and there is so much available, there are so many grants available, toolkits available. Really it's not something that you can't tackle.*

This group of parents was driven by a high perceived need for wellness in schools and a strong responsibility to contribute to the school community:

- *I'm very philanthropic, I love to give back and contribute. I think there's a lot to be done, so if I have the ability to do that, I want to do it...We can teach these kids when they're young to make those healthy choices and instill those healthy habits now, it's not going to be a struggle when they're adults and it's going to be routine. I just really thought it was important and saw ways that we can do that and influence that from school on up. **I think we have a responsibility to teach them that.***

### **Less engaged parents were interested in learning more**

Another group of parents was not as involved at their child's school but interested in wellness and wanted to know more of what was happening at their child's school and school district:

- *I really haven't seen anything or nothing's caught my eye. And I try to be on the look out for that. I work in the health care industry and I volunteer with local organizations, so I'm always keeping my eye open for ways to get involved, and I haven't seen anything.*

## Wellness committees and parent organizations

We asked parents about whether there was a wellness committee at their child's school or school district. Of the 30 parents interviewed for this study, 8 were actively involved with a wellness committee; 2 were trying to form a wellness committee; 4 indicated that there was a district-level committee but they were not actively involved; and 16 did not know if there was a committee at their child's school or school district. Engaged parents observed that the wellness committee ensured that initiatives were implemented in a comprehensive district-wide manner, rather than as one-time or "piece meal" events at individual schools.

Relatedly, participants noted that parent organizations, such as PTAs or PTOs, were another important organized group that could advance the work of wellness committees or initiatives. The parents that worked as a liaison across the wellness committees and PTAs ensured that communications about such initiatives were coordinated school or district-wide, streamlining these efforts.

### Wellness committees served as a platform for parent voices

For parents who had formed, joined, or were trying to form a wellness committee, committees were reported to be a facilitating platform to advance their initiatives. This function was particularly notable in cases when the parents perceived that the school district was less enthusiastic about wellness.

- *I think that there's a reason they [school district] don't want any active [wellness] committees. They won't want to have to change anything or think about anything, or improving things. **I think there's a reason they keep it [wellness committee meeting] very brief** or don't advertise any involvement. They don't want people to rock the boat, that's my impression.*

In Texas, a parent explained that the state law for School Health Advisory Committees (SHACs) provided a platform for wellness to remain "at the forefront" and since the committee was state-mandated, parents could leverage the state law to support their cause.

- *From the SHAC perspective, I think it's a good group. I think it's great that it's state mandated, **because it really forces the school to keep health and wellness at the forefront.** They obviously have a lot of things on their plate, but I do think that nutrition education and physical education at the school level is important...It's a state law, you have to have a SHAC. So if you don't, and you bring that information to an ISD [independent school district], they're going to need to listen.*

### School PTA involvement in wellness initiatives

A number of parents described ways that their school-level PTAs/PTOs were involved in wellness initiatives; for example, organizing physical activity fundraisers, putting on health fair events, etc. A handful of parents described PTAs that were more directly involved with ensuring the LWP was implemented at their child's school.

- *I think PTA can play a big part in that [wellness initiatives]. Even at the local level, in each individual school, **the whole point of PTA is to say, this is the policy, is it getting done?** We're here to help you with these funds or whatever. I sit down at the beginning of the year with my principal and go, **this is the policy, it's a school board policy, how is it getting done and how can I help you get it done?** So if you're up on those things, you can do those things and I'm here to help you do those things. They should work hand in hand. Some people don't see things that way, but that's what I see my role as.*
- *Say there was a wellness initiative that we wanted statewide. She [state PTA coordinator] could take that to state PTA and say, we want to advocate for this in all schools. Then when we go to convention, we could actually get that put on the books and vote on it. Then our statewide PTA would have an initiative and we would advocate for that. So that's kind of how PTA works. **Whatever want to advocate for, you present it and start and start a committee and hope that it gets picked up.***

### What worked: Advice for fellow parents

We asked engaged parents if they had advice for fellow parents who may just be starting out or struggling to advance LWP-related initiatives in their respective districts. Parents used a wide range of strategies, applied technical assistance resources, and formed relationships with external organizations.

- **Find "strength in numbers."** Parents described different ways that they had found like-minded parents to join their initiatives, whether it was through parent-run Facebook groups, knocking on windows in the parking lot, or slowly building a network. This "strength in numbers" tactic helped to more effectively have their message heard.
  - *I would say to find other parents that have common interests, so the strength in numbers. **If you are saying something alone, you are less likely to be taken seriously.** So if they find other parents that can be allies or, especially teachers or principals that could be allies. That can help you get a foot in the door.*
  - *I've gone to the district with other things and if it's just me saying it, it's like, this is just one parent. **The more parents the better.** Be very organized. Have enough parents together.*
  - *I don't think necessarily all parents are going to be this passionate or this informed or this excited. But **if you find groups of people that maybe have a personal interest, they might be a little bit more passionate.** That's just my thoughts.*

- **Engage PTA/PTO groups in wellness initiatives.** A handful of engaged parents described ways in which PTA/PTO groups supported LWP and/or wellness-related initiatives. In a small number of cases, this was done formally, with the PTA supporting LWP implementation and assisting with communications of initiatives. In other cases, this was done less formally, with parent groups supporting physical activity and health events.
  - *National PTA...You can look to see what their initiatives are every year. They go to Washington every year and lobby. All the state PTAs go to legislative conference every year and lobby for certain initiatives. This year in Florida, we got in our budget that kids got to have 20 minutes of free recess time and that was a Florida PTA initiative. We talk about fundraisers and whatever, but really the **PTA is to get policy implemented...Parents have power** so if it's something worth doing...that's how you get it...on a local level too, if you want policy to change, **policy doesn't change unless parents make it change.***
- **Don't criticize or complain; instead be proactive.** Parents were careful to communicate in solution-oriented, proactive ways with the school or school district, rather than focus on 'complaining' or negative messages.
  - *You always have to **try to partner with the people who truly have the power to get things done.** So if you start off criticizing the administration and the teachers, they're just going to completely wall you off, and think you're just one of those volatile, crazy parents. And I've seen that happen...So with any organization, you have to still find ways to say "okay, what are your goals? And what do you think is feasible to get done and in what time frame?"*
  - *Then sometimes I think the first instinct is to complain. But I think **it's better to talk about your concerns, and then ask how you can help. Because they likely get a lot of complaints, just from the average person, about a variety of things. So they're less likely to respond if you're just adding your complaint onto their already hundred complaint list.***
- **Form relationships with those in power.** Parents were sensitive to the hierarchical nature of schools, noting the importance of building relationships with the principal ("the decision-maker of the building") and other stakeholders with involvement and expertise in wellness. The importance of building relationships was stressed; when it came time to make a request, the parents were more effective in moving initiatives forward.
  - *It literally takes **forming that relationship and doing the face time.** It's not emails, it's not phone calls, it's going up there and the teacher seeing you...once you've got their trust, then they'll start coming to you and you can form that collaboration. And it's the same with the principal, it can't be I go talk to him*

*when I need something, it has to be a continuous effort where it feels like there's a partnership...it takes a lot of work though.*

- *They're [principals] the decision-maker of the building, so if you want to get something done, you have to show them how you're going to do it, what your plan is, and **how it's not going to cause any more work for them**, but how it's actually going to make things better or maybe alleviate some of the stress they might have. I think in general, principals do want to work with parents, but they only have negative interactions maybe. I don't know how many times parents are going there in a positive way. So just kind of having some more positive interaction and building relationships.*
- *And if you can find someone within the district that's an advocate, a Child Nutrition Director or coach. In my experience...the Child Nutrition Director and coaching staff don't always work together. And I don't think it's because they don't want to, I think it's just they're in different worlds. But yet their departments intersect in so many ways...From a parent perspective, you would **start with those people first, because they're in it, they deal with it every day**, they see the opportunity, they see the statistics, that's really the lifeblood for their jobs.*
- *So I would say just get involved. If you have an idea, **find someone you share that with inside the school** and see how you can get it done. That's really how so much of our programs have happened. It's with ideas and then getting buy-in from a teacher, a principal, or the administration and making it work.*
- **Do not give up; implementation takes time.** Parents advised the need to focus on implementation as a long-term goal, given that it took time to garner buy-in from the school community. In the meantime, parents stressed the importance of not becoming discouraged and giving up.
  - ***You can't expect it all at once.** So you're not feeling like if we didn't get what we wanted the first time around, we have an action plan to go back.*
  - *I just think the more people that you can reach out to, the more success you'll have. Sometimes you just lead by example and...**it may not seem like it's a success but then later people will come around.** That's one thing I've learned from all the events, all the fundraising, all the volunteering. They might say no initially but they're just slow to jump in.*
  - *Like I said, I think it's [implementation] been slow going. A lot of it is just, **persistence is the key I think.***
- **Do research for best practices.** Many parents took the time to do their own research for resources before and during implementation of wellness initiatives. Many types of resource searches were described; for example, some looked to learn about best practices directly from neighboring school districts, others reached out to parents through social media, and others did Google searches.

- *Look at other school districts in your county, or in your state, and just go on those websites for those school districts, and they'll all have some kind of health and wellness bar to click on...**See what's out there already and see if it's working.** I interviewed four or five wellness directors, and directors of fitness, personally. And food service directors. I actually did a survey that I did and shared with the committee. Because we wanted, again, we wanted to get best practices.*
  - *Have enough parents together, but also be organized with what you're requesting. **Have some data behind it and some research behind it...**Not just, this is what we want, but have reasons and how it can be done.*
- **Join a Facebook parent group.** Many parents belonged to Facebook groups specific to their children's schools and/or at the county and state level. This social media site was described as an important space for resources and advocacy for wellness and other school-related issues.
  - *I find this one [Facebook page] to be extremely helpful. Out of 600 women, I swear we could rule the world. **Because everybody knows something about something.** And so when I know nothing about something, I just ask them, and somebody happens to be an expert in it. Talking about school lunches, how schools deal with bullying, how schools deal with exercise.*
  - *We have our Facebook page and almost everyday there's an article or a school that's doing something.*
  - ***I'm on multiple Facebook parent groups and we have parents that have gathered together.** We had an organization teaching [program name] sex ed in the classroom, they rallied together and said we don't like them being in our district, we want them out. They mobilized, so this [desire to change school food] could be another situation if I started looking into it.*
  - *There's a person locally who's a nutritionist and she posts a lot [of nutrition resources] on Facebook so I rely on just keeping up with what I see her posting.*
- **Be mindful when talking about food.** Parents reflected that discussions about LWPs often brought up the topic of food and nutrition, which required cultural and class-sensitive approaches.
  - *And you've got to be very, very careful and tread lightly when you're talking about it [food and nutrition]. **I feel like whenever you're talking about food with other families it brings up feelings of more of a societal standpoint and like your finances** and you could offend some people who are not in the same financial bracket as you. I think there is a stigma that really good food is expensive and then there is the stigma of, you know, poor food is the junk food. So I would just say to be very careful about how you approach talking about food with people around you.*

## What worked: Advice for schools and school districts

Parents were also asked what schools and school districts could do to facilitate engagement with wellness initiatives and LWP implementation.

- **Communicate more broadly about the LWP.** Both engaged and less engaged parents reported that they wished their child’s school and school district put more effort into communicating about wellness-related initiatives. From difficulty finding the LWP, to lack of clarity about who to connect with regarding wellness concerns, parents noted that clearer communication about wellness and LWP initiatives would help to facilitate engagement. Parents also recommended that schools and school districts more frequently invite parents to become involved.
  - *I don’t think that most parents would know that our district even has a wellness policy. I think if school districts would ask parents, like that...we’re asking you to be involved, I think parents would show up.*
  - *I think if they had more information on the website or make it easier to find, it would make it [engaging with wellness] easier.*
  - *I haven’t seen anything, other than the short little lunch menu that comes home. I haven’t seen anything with regards to food or education-wise on health and nutrition. You get the informational pamphlet, like they’re hosting a flu vaccine, so you get that pamphlet. But I haven’t seen anything else.*
  - *You have to go to the school district website and then go to the board meetings section, then click on something like, other documents. Something like that, then you look in the policies and you find it in there. It’s like really, really difficult to find. I never would’ve found it.*
- **Designate a wellness liaison/leader at the district.** Despite the final rule’s requirement that the school district establish “wellness policy leadership” responsible for ensuring that the district is in compliance with the policy, many parents recalled being unsure of who to connect with at the school regarding wellness. As a result, parents wished for one point person or wellness leader who they could connect with to work on wellness initiatives. As one parent commented, this person could also be involved with nutrition education for students:
  - *Again, that’s where our health and physical education teacher and wellness chair works. It’s so key to have that person, that wellness warrior, wellness champion, in that building to find that person who will roll it out there.*
  - *I really think, I’d love to see someone designated as the person who gets the word out. You know, the person who could talk more to the kid about the choices that they’re making, and reach out to the families, maybe. Whole body wellness, and how it really ties back to how you are as a student.*

- **Continue to bridge home and school environments.** The important connection between home and school environments in promoting students' health was obvious to parents; however, they felt this was not often stressed by school districts. One parent recommended that schools continue to *“bridge the gap”* between these two environments.
  - *I think schools are starting to do a much better job of trying to bridge the gap between home and school, realizing that over the years...**that it helps students and it helps families to have the two be connected**, and understand that it's almost like an ecosystem for a student, to have that support between the educators and the family. I think that the best thing to do is just continue that. Like something as simple as a family night, that introduces yoga and nutritional eating, and things like that, to get kids involved.*
  - *So our Child Nutrition Department does a Farm Fresh Friday every month, where they'll sample a locally grown vegetable or fruit. They serve it in the cafeterias at the elementary school level. So we're **making sure that that connection with the parents and the communication link with all the schools**, that that information gets out and that the parents are aware that this goes on. Because I think it's a great program that we do, and it's just not widely publicized.*
- **Consider working parents.** Many parents recommended that schools and school districts hold wellness or parent-related meetings after work hours to promote attendance.
  - *A lot of them [school groups] will do their PTO and their Student Advisory Council meetings and things like that after the work hour. They'll start them at like six. So **I think that's a good thing for working parents to be able to get there.** They'll email the meetings minutes or things of that sort, you can see what went on.*
- **Reduce transportation and childcare barriers.** One community school district offered childcare and dinner during PTA and wellness meetings to facilitate engagement; other parents described challenges of transportation. Thus, parents recommended that school districts – when able – provide childcare and transportation to encourage parent attendance.
  - *She's [fellow mom] never attended anything at school, she doesn't have transportation, and **she doesn't have funds to access transportation** to do so. And for some families, childcare might be a barrier.*
- **Make wellness accessible and relatable.** Parents suggested that school districts could encourage more parent involvement by making wellness accessible to all by ensuring that topics are presented in a lay manner.
  - *Stay away from acronyms because people don't remember what they stand for and nobody knows what you're talking about. I find that all the time. People come to these meetings and they'll just talk over everybody's heads. If you're not*

*really involved, nobody knows what you're saying. People don't want to ask questions. They don't want to feel dumb and be embarrassed...So I don't want to say 'dumb it down,' because that's not what I mean either, but **be aware that not everybody knows what you're talking about...***

## Resources and technical assistance

We asked parents whether they had previously utilized or heard of specific resources, including those created by USDA *Team Nutrition*, PTA and other parent organizations, child health and nutrition advocates, and others.

### **Team Nutrition, MyPlate, and Local School Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit**

Parents were shown images of USDA's *Team Nutrition* website, including the *Local School Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit* ([Appendix D](#)). With the exception of one parent, no respondents were aware of USDA's *Team Nutrition* initiative but the majority reported that they had seen *MyPlate* in their child's cafeteria/school campus or at the pediatricians office, and noted that it "looked familiar."

In addition, only one parent had heard of USDA's *Local School Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit*; however, the majority of parents noted that it looked helpful and were interested in learning more about the resource. A few parents commented that the toolkit appeared to be geared towards elementary school students due to the cartoon graphics.

### **National and State Parent Teacher Association (PTA)**

A handful of engaged parents praised National PTA and their respective state PTAs as a source of helpful resources.

- ***I feel like PTA does such a good job at the national and state level of just putting things together for us and thinking about how to make things better...So, I feel like it's such a big voice and everything is so well put together that it's easy to use and you feel like all the work has been done for you. Then you can kind of grab onto it and present it...it's just so user friendly. I don't have time to put all that stuff together and I'm not an expert on all those things...I like how it's all in one place. I can go to the PTA website and if I'm looking for something specific, I type it in and a toolkit comes up or some resources about it. That's what I personally use because it's just what I like and it's easy.***

### **Other national and state organizations**

A small number of parents utilized university-extensions as well as statewide initiatives (e.g., LiveWell Colorado) that provided additional grants and resources for school wellness initiatives. In addition, a handful of engaged participants noted that AFHK had been a helpful technical assistance partner that helped with a range of activities, such as helping parents locate their LWPs on the school district websites or providing grants to fund wellness initiatives.

### Parent Facebook groups

As described above, many parents relied on Facebook groups to learn about resources, ask questions of fellow parents, and keep abreast of school wellness issues in their child's school or school district, county, or statewide.

### Desired technical assistance & resources

Parents were asked what type of resources would have been helpful or would help to facilitate future LWP implementation efforts:

- *Maybe a letter of correct verbiage and actual statistics for schools that have made changes and what they've seen...**maybe teacher quotes and principal quotes, something that you could physically have to show it to your administration that it will be better for your school...that there is a positive outcome at the end.** I think that would be very helpful.*
- *I would love if they'd come out with resources directed toward middle and high school students. When they have the cartoon characters and refer to them as children, it turns off the kids, they don't want to read it and parents don't want to read it...**Or why is it not on Snapchat or Instagram because those are the only places kids go for news.** They don't look up websites or Facebook...it needs to be where they are.*

One parent stated a need for resources for LWP assessments that were aligned with her small, rural school.

- *We basically created our own assessment...part of the reason is because the **assessments that are available at state or federal level do not meet the needs of a school our size...**we don't have a nurse in the school, we don't have anybody who's qualified to do that...it's just too small of a community, so we don't want to commit to that and we really can't assess that other than surveying students.*

### Fundraising

We asked parents about their awareness of fundraising activities at their child's school and school district, including food & beverage and physical activity fundraising.

#### Fundraising occurred mostly outside of school hours

Almost all parents reported that, to their knowledge, fundraising occurred outside of school hours to comply with regulations, without naming *Smart Snacks in School* specifically. However, many reported frustrations with the limitations of the standards that allow for foods that they perceived were undesirable to have on school campus:

- *They will sell concessions...They just sell typical pop, popcorn, suckers, hot dogs, you know your typical...that type of stuff. I know that's done 'after school hours' because we asked about that. **We were like, 'are you guys really supposed to do this?' They're like 'well, it's after school hours.'***

- *I would love to have available, how I can change concessions at sporting events, because that's one of my, **the biggest thorns in my side is the junk that they sell at concessions.** And I don't have any say because they're not during school hours.*
- *The wellness policy for our school only applies during school hours, so a lot of people don't carry that over into things like offering healthier fundraisers. We're really trying to....I'm in a piece of that with our PTO this year so hopefully I can have some influence there.*
- *I think one of the things we revised in the health and wellness policy for the school was that they weren't allowed to do food fundraising at the school. It had to be after school hours and off school property, because they were selling things like **butter braids, pretzels, and cookie dough. Things that we don't feel are appropriate to be in the school during school hours.** I know that they do...the sports do concessions at the sporting events, but because it's not during school hours, they're doing pizza, soda, nachos, and candy bars. They'll have a bowl of fruit there, but we tried for the last 5 or 6 years to change that and it just won't fly.*

### **Restaurant fundraisers were the most popular**

One of the most popular fundraisers reported by parents was fundraising night at a local or chain restaurant where proceeds from the revenues were donated to the school.

- *I want to make money without selling food and I don't like to overburden the parents. Like I said, we're a poor school so I don't want to be begging for money every 3 minutes. Everybody has to eat so I don't feel bad...but [restaurant] is a good night. I'm not at [pizza fast food restaurant] or something. I don't feel bad about [restaurant]. It's like, come eat here, it's good for you and it's just a mile from the school so it's convenient...So I try to be very non-aggressive, but easy for the school and easy for my parents.*

In addition, such events were perceived to support family time:

- *Yeah, we're just trying to bring back the camaraderie of families in our district. And again, this is PTO not our wellness committee doing it. You know, **it's the families that are supporting families...**We felt that bringing people together over a meal or just seeing each other outside of the school day in a fun, relaxing atmosphere is going to build those relationships. Hopefully more people will get involved in things and help and contribute.*
- *We do those [family restaurant nights] occasionally, but...the reason I like that one is because it's up to the parents' discretion. We do advertise it a bit in the school, but [restaurant] offers some healthy menu items. You don't have to get the French Fries, they have other things. Again, it's the parent that would drive the decision to go out to dinner because that's who we market it to.... [restaurant], the deal with them is that the owners are so generous to all the fundraisers that they buy meals for teachers and give so big with their hearts, that we kind of do it as a way to give back to them. I know that sounds weird, but we had almost \$3,000 worth of sales in the drive thru for them last*

*night, on a week night. It kind of gives back to them. We do make \$500...I would say it's kind of a mutually beneficial situation.*

One parent described that she preferred the 'write a check' fundraiser so that the proceeds were directly supporting the school:

- *The school does a wrapping paper, candies, cookie dough fundraisers every year in the fall. And then the PTO does a 'write a check' fundraiser where you just write a check, and 100% goes to them. **So from a parent perspective, I like the 'write a check,' because I don't have to buy the tchotchkes and all the cookie dough that I really don't need to be eating. And I know where 100% of the funds go. Whereas with the fundraising company, the school gets 40% of the profits, and the fundraising company gets 60% of it, and it is what it is.***

### **Physical activity fundraisers**

Parents described a wide range of events, such as 5Ks, track & field days, fun runs, Color Runs, Jump Ropes for Heart, Laps for Learning. Often the fundraisers were organized by the PTA/PTO or through a partnership with an external organization, such as local gyms, American Heart Association, Action for Healthy Kids, or other organizations. The majority of fundraisers were described as singular events that happened once or twice per year.

## Challenges to parent engagement

Parents described some challenges to engaging with school wellness at their child's middle schools.

### **Perceived barriers to engagement**

Less engaged parents described personal barriers to engaging in wellness activities, joining the PTA/PTO, as well as being connected with the school district more broadly. On the other hand, engaged parents described barriers to encouraging or increasing involvement amongst fellow parents.

- **Poor economic conditions and working parents.** Parents described many examples of fellow parents who were too busy to be engaged at school due to challenging economic situations.
  - *I know every parent loves their kid. **The economy is not as great as they want us to think it is, and many people are working multiple jobs. They just don't have time.***
  - *Our middle school is a Title 1 middle school, we're at like 92% free and reduced lunch. I want to say we're like 93% minority [students]. **They're [parents] busy, they're working.** We have a lot of ESL [English as Second Language], we have a big community of that, like 30%. It's just hard to get engagement.*

- *Some [parents] just don't realize...they're not taught that [about health] or don't understand the connection. Some just don't have time.*
- **Schools' limited priority for health and wellness.** Many parents perceived that their child's school did not prioritize wellness-related initiatives; thus, it was challenging to advocate for wellness-related initiatives.
  - *I don't think it's [wellness] a priority, to be honest with you. It's not like bullying or special needs classes. Unfortunately, **it's one of those things where I think if they have to do it, they do it.** Otherwise, it's not really on anyone's priority list.*
  - *I just feel like the junk food is out of control at our school...and we were trying to get a group together to start a wellness committee and I've had very little feedback, like people [school staff and administrators] just don't have the time to do it or they don't want to. **It just feels like me against the whole school basically, like they're not willing to change.** So that's where I'm at right now.*
- **Characteristics of the school community.** Several parents noted that engagement was easier in smaller communities, where parents were more familiar with one another.
  - *When you're in a more urban district, it's a bit harder...Obviously [district name] is a small district. **You have a very tight-knit community, you have parents who are involved,** it's very easy to get parents to volunteer and commit to working on and volunteering for a committee. But I can't say it's the case for everywhere across the US.*

### **Differences in engagement with middle versus elementary school**

Relatedly, amidst discussions about parental engagement, many described being less engaged now that their child is in middle school. Several reasons were provided for this change in engagement:

- **Administrators and teachers emphasized more student independence.** Parents reported that they received messages from teachers and administrators to give students more independence.
  - *And I think as the kids get older, parents start to not be a part of the school and programs. And part of that is the administration wants the kids to be their own advocates. They need to be responsible for their work, their information and communication. **It's not to say the school doesn't want parent involvement but I think it's just a different mentality.***
  - *The former principal's attitude is that **this is a time for kids to figure out how to be independent** and sort of urge parents to have less engagement and allow them to develop their independence.*

- **Middle school students are more independent.** Parents noted that their children involved them less in school-related activities; thus, they felt more distant and less likely to be engaged.
  - *If you've ever met a seventh grader, you would know they're not going to be very talkative about school and things like the cafeteria or PE or extra activities. It's pretty much 'how was your day?' and 'fine, Mom.'*
  - *Parents in elementary, they're coming in and helping with...food for parties, they have a better connection between teachers and parents. And **when they get into upper grades, the kids are kind of shutting you out a bit, they're not sharing, and so I think you don't feel that connection as you did when your kids were little... you feel like there is an invisible barrier between you and the school.***

Two parents asserted that, despite these reasons, middle school was a time when parents should continue with their engagement:

- *I'm trying to turn everyone's mindset around. 5th grade you're there for all of these parties and then all of the sudden, they're in middle school and **going through the most tumultuous time, biggest social issues, awkward growing stage, and now you're pulling back? That's not the time to pull back.***
- *Parents are done by then. You know, I did all that in elementary school, I don't need to help now. **It's really kind of a shame, because that's when you need to be more involved I think.** Everybody works, everyone is busy, but this is when they kind of need more interaction.*

## Conclusions

To our knowledge, no studies have examined parents' perspectives of school wellness initiatives or the LWP more specifically since the final rule. This study focused on parents of middle school students due to the limited nature of literature at the middle school level and limited parental engagement at the middle school level. Parents of middle school students reported a wide range of experiences with working on wellness initiatives, as well as with engagement with PTA/PTO groups in their respective schools and school districts. From these experiences, parents provided recommendations for schools and school districts and for fellow parents working on wellness in their respective schools. Notably, parents described resources such as state and national PTAs as important sources of technical assistance.

Given that the LWP final rule stressed the inclusion and participation of stakeholders – including parents – in the LWP process, the findings in this report may inform efforts to improve parent engagement in middle schools. Wellness advocates, government, and other technical assistance providers may consider parents' recommendations in this report to encourage schools and school districts to reduce barriers to participation. In addition, parents may consider recommendations from fellow parents who have had success with wellness initiatives

in their respective middle schools. Strategies such as linking PTA/PTO with wellness, researching best practices, engaging school professionals, and joining parent-run Facebook groups, were suggested by parents. Supporting parents' engagement is an important step to ensuring successful implementation and sustainability of wellness initiatives.

## Appendix A

### USDA Local Wellness Policy Final Rule Summary

Since the 2006-2007 school year, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has required that all school districts participating in the federal Child Nutrition Program develop and implement a local school wellness policy (LWP) that sets forth nutrition and physical activity goals for students.<sup>14</sup> The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 prompted adoption of a final rule<sup>15</sup> that renewed and expanded the LWP requirements; the requirements took effect for the 2017-2018 school year.

Under the local wellness policy final rule, wellness policies are required to include, at a minimum:

- Goals for nutrition promotion and education, physical activity, and other school-based activities that promote student wellness after reviewing and considering evidence-based strategies;
- Nutrition guidelines for all foods and beverages available on each school campus during the school day that are consistent with Federal school meal standards and *Smart Snacks in School* nutrition standards;
- Nutrition standards for all foods and beverages provided, but not sold, to students during the school day;
- Policies for food and beverage marketing that allow advertising of only those foods and beverages that meet *Smart Snacks in School*;
- Permission for stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, school food authority, teachers of physical education, school health professionals, school board, school administrators, and the public) to participate in policy development, implementation, review, and updates;
- A requirement that the district annually inform and update the community about the policy's content, implementation, and any updates;
- A requirement that the district triennially measure and make available to the public an assessment on implementation, including school compliance, alignment with model wellness policies, and a description of progress made in attaining the wellness policy goals; and
- Designating one or more district and/or school officials as wellness policy leadership who are responsible for ensuring school-level compliance with the wellness policy

Incorporated by reference into the final rule are two regulations that are independently required by all districts that participate in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs: (1) Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs,<sup>15</sup> (effective school year 2012-13) and (2) *Smart Snacks in School*<sup>16</sup> (effective school year 2014-15).

## Appendix B

### Methods

#### **Design and Objectives**

Parents offer a unique perspective as key stakeholders in children and adolescents' health and well-being. This study was a key informant qualitative study that aimed to understand parents of middle school aged students' perceptions and experiences with local school wellness policy (LWP) implementation.

#### **Sampling and Recruitment**

Parents were recruited from two databases through Action for Healthy Kids (AFHK), as well as through professional connections with AFHK State Coordinators or National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) State Coordinators. Each strategy is described next.

- 1) The first database included parents of middle school students (n=151) who were registered with the AFHK online database in a variety of ways: they were involved directly in a grant project, volunteered to be part of a local AFHK school team, donated their time or money to AFHK, participated in AFHK local events at their child's school, or simply registered on the website (<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/index.php>) to receive emails updates, resources, and newsletters pertaining to school health and wellness. There are over 100,000 volunteers affiliated with the organization with varying levels of participation. From this database, we identified a list of parents based on the following characteristics:
  - Self-identified parent with child in middle school
  - Completion of School Health Index survey
  - Completion of school grant application
  - Child enrolled in a majority high or low free and reduced price eligible school

Recruitment emails were sent by AFHK State Coordinators to invite parents to participate. We excluded parents who were employed at a school or school district or those who were employed by AFHK.

- 2) The second database included parents (n=203) who had signed up with a new initiative: *Parents for Healthy Kids* – a website with resources targeted towards parents, which was a partnership with AFHK and the National PTA. UIC study team members sent out email blasts to parents listed on this database and screened those who responded to ensure they had a child in middle school and were not employed at a school district.
- 3) Lastly, AFHK State Coordinators recruited parents of middle school students via email through their professional parent and colleague networks.
  - AFHK State Coordinators commonly interact with parents through various AFHK grants and initiatives, including parents of middle school students (not listed on the

above two databases). We requested State Coordinators to email such parents to invite them to participate.

- AFHK State Coordinators also commonly correspond with Parent Teacher Association (PTA) State Coordinators for their respective state-level school wellness initiatives. We also asked AFHK State Coordinators to email PTA State Coordinators and request that they send the recruitment email to potential parent participants.

The three strategies resulted in parents with a wide range of awareness and LWP implementation experiences. Demographic information about the middle schools that the parents' children attended at the time of the interviews are listed in Table 1.

### **Interview Guide**

An interview guide ([Appendix C](#)) was created with input from USDA Food and Nutrition Service officials. This guide was pilot tested with two parents to refine the flow and terminology of questions. Questions focused on parents' awareness and experiences with LWP implementation, including topics around parent engagement, communications, and fundraising.

### **Procedures**

Parents who expressed interest were emailed a consent form to review in advance and the form was reviewed with the interviewer prior to requesting verbal consent. Telephone interviews were conducted and audio recorded using GoToMeeting software; interviews lasted roughly 30-60mins. One interviewer and one note taker conducted the interviews and post interview summary notes were recorded and consulted during analysis. All audio recorded interviews were transcribed by a research assistant or professional transcription service.

### **Coding & Analysis**

Transcripts were uploaded into Atlas.ti Qualitative Data Analysis Software v8 for team coding. A coding guide was created using the interview guides and iteratively revised throughout team coding. Two analysts, trained in qualitative methods, convened weekly to discuss coding discrepancies, code definitions, and emergent themes.<sup>7</sup> Memos were used to document progress and analysis over the course of meetings.<sup>8</sup> Analysis included principles of constant comparative analysis.<sup>9</sup>

This study was approved by the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Institutional Review Board (#2015-0720) and the University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board (H15-165).

**Table 1. Characteristics of the schools that participating parents' children attended (n=29)**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>N (%)</b>
Census region	<p>West 5 (17%)</p> <p>Northeast 9 (31%)</p> <p>South 8 (28%)</p> <p>Midwest 7 (24%)</p>
Locale	<p>Rural 7 (24%)</p> <p>Suburb 15 (52%)</p> <p>Urban 7 (24%)</p>
Socioeconomic status (tertiles)	<p>Low (0-40.72%) 18 (62%)</p> <p>Medium (40.72-68.75%) 9 (31%)</p> <p>High (67-100%) 1 (3%)</p>
School size (tertiles)	<p>Small (0-316) 2 (7%)</p> <p>Middle (317-569) 5 (17%)</p> <p>High (570-14,153) 22 (76%)</p>
Race/ethnicity	<p>Majority White 15 (52%)</p> <p>Majority Black 1 (3%)</p> <p>Other 13 (45%)</p>

## Appendix C

### Parent Interview Guide

#### **Introduction**

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is [MODERATOR NAME]. This interview will last until approximately [TIME], will you be able to speak until that time? Please let me know if you need to go at any time.

As you may know, this interview is part of a larger study, the National Wellness Policy Study, where we are looking at the implementation of school health-related policies. At this time, we are interested in hearing your perspective and personal experience with local wellness policies (which we call “LWPs”) at your child’s school and school district.

Before I begin, [see verbal consent script].

I’d like to confirm that you are ok with being audio recorded? The purpose of the recording is to make sure I don’t miss anything you say. Our study’s research staff are the only people who will hear it. Your name and any personal or identifying information will not be included in any of our reporting documents.

[If participant declines audio tape]. Would you be comfortable if I took notes during the interview? Any notes I take will only be seen by myself and our research staff for analysis purposes. Your name and any personal or identifying information will not be included in any of our reporting documents.

[If participant agrees]. Thank you.

[If participant declines note taking]. OK, thanks for letting me know. I will refrain from taking notes.

#### **Introduction Questions**

1. What grade(s) are your school-aged students in? How long has your child been at the middle school?
2. Have you been employed by the school district or any other school district? In what capacity? A substitute teacher at the child where the middle
3. Can you describe your involvement with Action for Healthy Kids?
4. Can you briefly describe your involvement with your middle school-aged child’s school and/or school district?
  - Probe: Wellness committee and/or PTA PTO
  - Probe: How long have you been doing that?
  - Probe: What prompted you to join the committee/ PTA PTO?
  - Probe: Do these two groups interact with each other?
5. Have you been involved in your district or school’s wellness committee?
  - Probe: How did you become involved? Were you recruited or did you seek out a position on the committee? What interested you about the committee?
  - Probe: Who is on the committee? Who was leading that committee?
  - Probe: How frequently does the committee meet? Is it well attended?

Now I have some questions specific to your child's *school*. Please note that if you have more than one child, we are specifically interested in your middle school-aged child's school.

6. Is there a wellness or school health committee at your child's school?
  - Probe: If yes, are you involved?
  - Probe: If no, are you aware if there has there ever been one?
  - Probe: Can you tell me about the other people who are on the committee?
  - Probe: How active is the wellness committee?
  - Probe: How frequently does the committee meet?

### **School Wellness Policies**

As you may know, the federal requirements for school wellness policies apply to entire school districts, even though much of the work of implementing the policy happens at the school building level. I will be asking questions about both your school district's written policy and your perspective on how these policies are implemented in your children's school building. Please think about your child in the middle school.

So, let's begin by talking about your school district's policy.

7. Have you seen your district's wellness policy?
  - Probe: [ if yes]: where have you seen it? On the district or school website? Posted at the school? Any other places you've seen the policy?
  - Probe: Do you know when the policy was last updated?
  - Probe: [If yes]: Were you involved with the development of the policy?
  - Off the top of your head, can you briefly describe what topics or issues the district's wellness policy addresses?
  - Have you been involved in the implementation of the any components of the policy at the district level?
  - [If yes]: Off the top of your head, can you briefly describe what topics or issues that you've worked on implementing from the wellness policy?

As you may know, there are some new federal rules from the US Department of Agriculture about what needs to be included in district wellness policies beginning with this school year. For example, there are new requirements for food marketing on campus and how often the policy should be evaluated.

8. Have you heard about any changes within your district as a result of these new rules?
9. Has your district wellness committee started to work on these changes?

### **Communications**

10. How does your child's middle school communicate about the wellness policy to parents?
  - Probe: Newsletters, emails, school website, social media (e.g., Facebook posts)
  - Probe: Have you seen updates to the wellness policy through any of the above channels (newsletters, emails, website....)?

- Is the communication coming from school or district level?
11. Has your child's school ever sent any wellness or nutrition education resources home?
  12. Are there other educational opportunities provided for parents related to wellness?
    - Probe: What type of resources? Who sent the materials?

**Parent Involvement**

We are interested in the different ways that parents are involved with district and school wellness initiatives.

13. Are you aware if your district or school has a PTA or PTO group?  
 [District may have a PTA that is part of the national organization. Each school may have a PTO that focuses on just fundraising for events or services at that school]
  - Probe: If yes, how are you involved? How, if at all, is the PTA/PTO involved with wellness initiatives?
14. Does your district/school have a Parent University (or another type of parent group that is not the PTA)?
  - Probe: If yes, how are you involved with it? How, if at all, is the Parent University connected to wellness initiatives?

We are interested in how parents become engaged in wellness policy initiatives. Besides yourself, do you know of other parents who are engaged with your school/school district's wellness policy?

15. Do you have ideas about how parents could be encouraged to become more engaged with wellness policies and wellness initiatives in your district and school?
  - Probe: [If they are involved]: what advice would you suggest to other parents who may be just starting out with wellness initiatives at their child's school?
  - Probe: Do you have ideas about why some parents are not able to be engaged with wellness initiatives? What are the barriers to participating?

**TA and Resources**

Next, we are interested to learn about any resources you may have used while working on wellness initiatives in your school district (or at your child's school if the parent has only worked at the school building level). [Show resource images on goto screen]

16. Have you heard of Team Nutrition resources from the US Department of Agriculture?
  - Probe: [If yes] how did you hear about these resources?
  - Probe: [If yes] How have you used Team Nutrition resources? Have these resources been helpful in advancing your wellness initiatives?
17. Have you heard of the Local Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit from the US Department of Agriculture? [show on Goto screen]

- Probe: [If yes] how did you hear about this resource?
- Probe: [If yes] How have you used the Local Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit? Which material(s) did you use? Has this resource been helpful in advancing your wellness initiatives?

18. What other resources have you and others in your district (or school) used in your work to advance wellness policy initiatives?

- Probe: How did you come across these resources? Did anyone else have resources on the committee?

19. What other resources would have been helpful?

### **Fundraisers**

We are interested in learning about fundraisers at your child’s school. We know that there can be many types of fundraisers, such as bakes sales, gift wrap sales, walkathons, etc., and we know that fundraisers can take place both during and outside of the school day.

First, we are interested in fundraisers that involve selling foods and beverages that occur *during* the school day.

20. Does the school district have any fundraising policies?

- If yes, how are fundraising policies communicated to you?
- How have parents responded to the fundraising policy?
- Have these policies changed in recent years?

21. What kinds of food & beverages are sold for fundraisers at your child’s middle school?

Probes:

- Are there fundraisers that sell food or beverages that have you participated in personally?
- Foods sold through fundraisers during the day at school are supposed to meet Smart Snacks nutrition standards. Were you aware of this federal rule?
- Some districts have elected to allow a certain number of fundraisers that are exempt from the nutrition standards. Does your district allow fundraisers that do not meet the nutrition rules? If so, is there a specific number that are allowed?

22. Who typically conducts these fundraisers (i.e., group)? What is the money raised typically used for?

Next, we are going to ask you about fundraisers that involve physical activity, such as races or walk-a-thons that occur *during* the school day.

23. Has your school held any physical activity fundraisers during the school day?

Probe:

- If yes, can you name or describe a few (examples include jump rope for heart, walk-a-thons, etc.)
- If yes, please tell us your experience with them?

24. Who typically conducts these fundraisers (i.e., group)? What is the money raised typically used for?

**Closing Questions**

25. Is there anything else you'd like to share about wellness policies at your child's school and district? Do you have any questions for us at this time?

Thank you so much for participating in this group. We really appreciate your time and contribution to this project. We will be emailing a gift card to thank you for your participation, please verify that this is the correct email address to send the card? [CONFIRM EMAIL ADDRESS]

# Appendix D

## Local School Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit

The screenshot shows the USDA Food and Nutrition Service website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "About FNS", "Ask the Expert", "Contact Us", "Other Languages", and "En Español". Below this is a search bar and a menu with "Programs", "Data", "Newsroom", "Research", "Forms", and "Grants". Social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Email, Flickr, and RSS are also present.

The main content area is titled "Local School Wellness Policy Outreach Toolkit" and includes a "Print" button. The header of the toolkit section reads "Be A School Wellness Champion" and "OUTREACH TOOLKIT". An illustration depicts a school cafeteria scene with children and staff around a table, a fruit stand, and a person in a wheelchair.

Engage school staff and parents in school wellness using these ready-to-go communication tools. Sharing news about your Local School Wellness Policy is easy with these flyers, presentations, newsletter articles, and social media posts. Your school can personalize them to make them specific to your Local School Wellness Policy activities.

**Four simple steps:**

- 1. Learn about the kit and how to use it.**
  - [Cover letter](#)
- 2. Download the communication tools.**
  - [Letter to Principal](#)
  - [Parent Flyer \[English\]](#) [[Spanish](#)]

**Left sidebar navigation:**

- > **Team Nutrition Home**
- How To Apply**
  - > [Become a TN School](#)
- Popular Topics**
  - > [About Team Nutrition](#)
  - > [MyPlate](#)
  - > [Resource Library](#)
  - > [Resource Order Form](#)
  - > [HealthierUS School Challenge](#)
  - > [Graphics Library](#)
  - > [Training Grants](#)
  - > [Local Wellness Policy](#)
  - > [Webinars and Presentations](#)
  - > [Spanish Materials](#)
- Other Useful Links**
  - > [Team Up](#)
  - > [E-Newsletter](#)
  - > [Best Practices Sharing Center](#)
  - > [Healthy Meals Resource System](#)
  - > [Healthier School Day](#)



## Parents, we need your help to make our school healthier!

Children spend most of their day at school. So, it's important that they have healthy foods and drinks while they are there. Good nutrition also helps kids learn better at school. Our school wellness policy tells how our school is making the healthy choice, the easy choice for kids. Parents can help update the school wellness policy and to put it into action.

### 4 ways parents can help:

<p><b>1</b> Join the school wellness committee. Our next meeting is at XXX from XXX to XXX. The wellness committee meets [insert how often] and works on projects to help make our school healthier. You do not need any special training to be on the committee, just an interest in keeping our school healthy!</p> 	<p><b>2</b> Read the school wellness policy at [insert URL]. For questions or more information, contact: [XXXX]</p> 
<p><b>3</b> Support classroom and school events to have healthy foods and get kids physically active. Keep the wellness policy in mind when planning what foods and beverages to have at events and celebrations.</p> 	<p><b>4</b> Rate our school wellness. Share how our school is doing in promoting good nutrition and physical activity at: [XXXX]</p> 

### What is in our school wellness policy?

The full school wellness policy is online at: [XXXX].

Major topics in the policy are:

- Nutrition education and promotion
- Physical activity
- Other wellness activities (such as school gardens and walk/bike to school)
- Nutrition standards for all foods and drinks sold to kids at school
- Foods and drinks that may be given to students (such as at classroom celebrations or foods given as rewards for behavior)
- Food and beverage marketing

We are looking forward to working with you to ensure our school continues to be a healthy place that supports growth and learning.

**Better Health = Better Learners**

## Appendix E

### References

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